

History of the Gober Cemetery 1847-1997

by  
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## *History of Gober Cemetery*

### Introduction

The eminent responsibility and necessary establishment of a cemetery at Gober, Texas cannot be noteworthy without a brief history of the early settlers. The struggles they endured toward the building of this small village will forever be acknowledged generation after generation. The experience of life and death, as we understand them shall forever be. The importance of the Gober Cemetery cannot be discussed without a brief history of the beginnings of the village called Gober.

### Geographic Location

Gober is a community located approximately 10 miles Southeast of Bonham. It was settled on the head waters of the North Sulphur River. Gober is approximately 150 years old dating back to the time when Texas was a Republic. (1)

One of the Gober long time citizens describes the beautiful country side as a picturesque scene of wild flowers in the early spring. Indian paint brushes, bluebonnets, buttercups and many others blend together with natures hues. The foliage embraces one's feelings of tranquillity, as one remembers his past and reclaims his memory in the present time.

A beautiful creek, called Allen, flows in front of the northern part of the cemetery and continues on to the North Sulphur River. The entrance to the cemetery is located on the north eastern corner. Two large granite stones mark the entrance. The one on the left is engraved, "Gober Cemetery" and the one on the right is initialed "G.C."

### Early Settlers

One of the earliest settlers was Jerry A. Bone. He and his family came to this community in 1845 from Green County, Missouri. Mr. Bone and his wife, Rachel, had 12 sons and one daughter. All of the sons fought in the Civil War.

In 1847, the James M. Carpenter family came to the area and settled on Rock Creek. They came from Alabama in covered wagons drawn by oxen. It took about 6 months for them to complete the trip. There has been a Carpenter living in Gober for the past 128 years. (2)

Through the years of 1853 to 1895, many settlers continued to come to Fannin County and settled in the Gober area. Some of the names of these early settlers were as follows: George W. Biggerstaff (1853), who raised a family of 13. His brothers and sister, Bill, Benjamin, James, John and Elizabeth settled nearby in 1854 (3)

The Carpenter family who came to Gober in 1847 and acquired land from Gober to China Grove. In 1909, the Carpenter family saw the need for additional land for the small cemetery that had been used up until this time. The Carpenter family donated approximately two and one half acres to be used for cemetery purposes only. (4)

As it was known to the early settlers, food, clothing and shelter were crucial for survival. The reality of the need of churches and a burial ground for its citizens were also essential. The earliest recorded grave is R. M. C. Self in 1865. (5)

The Gober Cemetery records memories and the spirit of early Gober residents. One of the most noble deeds of the community can be seen at the grave of Aaron Hassenger, 1860-1907. The citizens of the community raised money to buy a marble slab for his grave because his relatives were unknown. At this time, the cemetery has the earliest

markers in the county. Many of the early markers are worn by time and weather so that the carvings are almost unreadable. (6)

### Veterans

There are Confederate soldiers, veterans of World War I, World War II, Korean War and Viet Nam War buried in this cemetery. The Gober men did answer the call to help preserve the peace of our country.

There are six Confederate soldiers buried in the Gober Cemetery. (7) The Civil War was a tragic time for our country and town with many factors and issues. We were involved in a war among ourselves.

In 1917 many men received a card from Woodrow Wilson. They were drafted and were to experience war across the Atlantic. As recorded by Woodrow Wilson in 1913, "these gallant men of our armed forces fought for the ideals which they knew to be the ideals of their country." (8) There are three veterans of World War I buried in the Gober Cemetery (9)

Memories also linger after World War II. There are 24 veterans of World War II buried in the Gober Cemetery. These were those who gave the ultimate - their lives. Our country's victory in 1945 gave us a satisfaction of winning lasting peace, so let us not forget that it was bought with a price. (10)

We do not know how many of our young men were involved in the Korean Conflict. There is one Korean veteran buried in the Gober Cemetery. (11) We also have two Viet Nam veterans buried in our cemetery. (12)

### Markers

In a variety of ways, loved ones of the deceased have chosen to memorialize their family and friends with markers of wood, concrete, brick, iron, marble, rock and granite. The inscriptions on these markers tell us that people of distinguished character and performance have been and still are a part of the heritage of this small town.

Presently, our cemetery contains 916 marked graves and 71 unmarked graves. It is reported that in the early days, when people could not afford the cost of a marker or burial, civic organizations and churches would contribute to the cost of these items. (13)

In the early days up through the 1940's it was customary for the people of the community to set up during the entire night before the deceased was buried. The day before the funeral the men of the community would meet together with their picks and shovels and dig the grave. When the funeral was completed, with the family still present, these same men would fill the grave with the dirt that had been removed. (14)

In the late 1800's and early 1900's horse and buggy carriages were used to transport the body from the home to the cemetery. (15) A victrola was used to provide music for many of the funerals in this day. (16)

In 1875 the people of the community got together and raised money to build a tabernacle. This money was raised by selling eggs, butter and by small amounts of money that people could afford to give. This tabernacle is still available for services. People met twice a month as volunteers to clean the cemetery. During this period of time a lady in the community, Mrs. Ophelia Woodson, would bathe and clothe the deceased. Mr. Newt Cunningham who ran a local dry good store, would provide and deliver coffins. (17)

During this time the cemetery would have such a growth of weeds and grass that the people of the community decided to designate a clean up day. The first Friday of each

month was set aside as a clean up day. Minnie Turman, Tera Cunningham and Aunt Lera Biggerstaff got together and prepared a lunch to take to the workers. These same women drove throughout the community in horse and buggy to collect money that would help defray the cost of the tabernacle. (18) This practice continued for many years. Then in 1942, it was decided to change the volunteers' work day, held on the first Friday of each month to, to a paid employee who would be responsible for cemetery upkeep. (19) It was also decided that there would be a service on the third Sunday in May. Donations would be taken on this day for the upkeep of the cemetery. Later, the third Sunday of May was designated as "Gober Cemetery Memorial Day". This practice is still observed to this day. (20)

The cemetery has grown in size greatly since the original donation of the land from the Carpenter family. A small track was purchased for \$200.00 from E. L. Morris and wife Ludie Morris on the twenty seventh day of April 1951. (21)

Another track of land was purchased from W. R. Hale on the twelfth day of May 1951, for a sum of \$100.00. This track consisted of three eighths of an acre and the deed stipulated that it was to be used for cemetery purposes only. (22)

An additional track of land was bought the twenty-first day of July 1954 from J. W. Freeman. A sum of \$100.00 was paid for this land. (23)

On July 18th, 1995, the Bonham Independent School District deeded the old school ground to the Cemetery Association for a sum of \$10.00. This track contains approximately three acres. (24)

For many years the home of the post office was in a local grocery store. In 1945 the grocery store housing the post office burned. The following year several local men

gathered money and constructed a post office building. The Cemetery Association bought a small plot and the post office was placed there and the post office building remains in that spot today. (25)

In May of 1977 the Gober Perpetual Care Cemetery Association was organized. (26) The by-laws of the association stated that all money received from donations would be placed in a certificate of deposit and only the interest on this money could be used for expenses of the upkeep of the cemetery. The by-laws also stated that a board of directors would be elected. These directors would serve for a life time or unless they resigned. The first board of directors was as follows:

Z. W. Trout - president

V. R. (Buddy) Smith - vice president

Joetta Wallace -secretary

H. O. Porter

John Babers

A. D. Woodson

Bill Sparks

Norris Carpenter

Wynele Crick (27)

In 1977 the association had \$6900.00 dollars as its total assets. Today, we have total assets of \$116,000.00. The success of the Memorial Day programs is due in part to local talent for the programs throughout the history of the association. The boys and girls from the local high school participated in this year after year. (28)

The most recent meeting was held May 18, 1997. The program began at 11:00 A.M. and ended at 2:30 P. M. The Community Center was filled and all enjoyed a covered dish lunch. Brother Joe Neal Smith, pastor of Sandy Baptist Church, and an ex-student of Gober High School brought the address. The title of his address was "Our Heroes." He pointed out that our loved ones left behind a heritage of great character.

It is quoted in the memorials from the late Speaker Rayburn, "There is a contact that even death cannot break." (29) This emotional feeling of love for all was observed on the faces of the people who chose to honor their loved one on this outstanding and reverent day.

It is reported in an address by Sam Rayburn in 1962, "that while earth destroys a mortal being, it presents him to us in boldest relief. The living man is often too close to us, too much a part of our daily lives and activities, to be reviewed objectively. Death reveals him to us in his entirety, particularly the nobility of his soul and the value of his deeds." (30)

The achievements and hardships of these people who are resting in the Gober Cemetery will forever enhance the beauty of the past and present life of Gober, Texas.

We feel that it is fitting and proper that these people be so honored and long recognized with a placement of a Historical Marker. (31)



## Footnotes

- (1) Hodge, Floyd Crandel; History of Fannin County; Pioneer Publishers; pp.80-81, 1966
- (2) Broiles, Una Mae; Diary
- (3) Broiles, Una Mae; Diary
- (4) Nelson, Lucille; Conversation at home, August 13, 1997
- (5) Fannin County Cemetery Records, 1955-65 p.50
- (6) Fannin County Folks and Facts, Bonham Public Library
- (7) Green, Jack; Caretaker, at his home August 12, 1997
- (8) Woodson, Wilson; 1913
- (9) Burlison, Muriel; Ladonia Historian interview, August 13, 1997
- (10) Green, Jack; Caretaker, at his home, August 1, 1997
- (11) Green, Jack; caretaker, at his home, August 11, 1997
- (12) Green, Jack; caretaker, at his home, August 1, 1997
- (13) Brent, Alene; Daughter of Odd Fellows Association, August 17, 1997
- (14) Porter, Hattie; interview by Joan Thomas, August 11, 1997
- (15) Fisk, Margaret; at her home in Ladonia, August 11, 1997
- (16) Moore, Mrs. Wise; Diary given by Mildred Moore
- (17) Woodson, Annie Faye; interview at her home, August 12, 1997
- (18) Moore, Dean; interview, August 14, 1997
- (19) Whitacre, Estell, interview at her home in Bonham, August 14, 1997
- (20) Woodson, Annie Faye; interview by Joan Thomas May 20, 1997
- (21) Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 317, p. 515-16
- (22) Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 317, p. 576

- (23) Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 506, p. 286
- (24) Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 815, p. 0555
- (25) Nelson, Lucille; interview at her home with paper clippings
- (26) Health and Safety Code; Chapter 712; p. 3, Texas Preservation Guidelines
- (27) Trout, Z.W.; Smith, V.R.; Wallace, Joetta; interviews
- (28) Smith, V.R. ; interview at his home, August 12, 1997
- (29) Rayburn, Sam; speech 1962
- (30) Rayburn, Sam; Memorial Address to Congress, 1962. p. 255
- (31) Trout, Z.W.

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- Burleson, Murial; Ladonia Historian; interview August 31, 1997
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- Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 317, pp 515-16
- Fannin County Clerk; Vol. 317, p. 576
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- Fisk, Margaret; at her home in Ladonia, August 11, 1997
- Green, Jack; Caretaker, at his home, August 12, 1977
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- Nelson, Lucille; interview at her home, August 13, 1997
- Nelson, Lucille; paper clippings
- Porter, Hattie; interview by Joan Thomas, August 11, 1997
- Rayburn, Sam; Speaks to Congress, 1962 p. 28
- Rayburn, Sam; Memorial Address, 1962 p. 255
- Smith, V.R.; interview at home, August 12, 1997
- Trout, Z. W. Smith, V. R., Wallace, Joetta, personal interview, May 18, 1997

Whitacre, Estell; interview at her home in Bonham, August 14, 1997

Wilson, Woodrow - 1913

Woodson, Annie Faye; personal interview by Joan Thomas, May 20, 1997

Woodson, Annie Faye; interview, August 12, 1997